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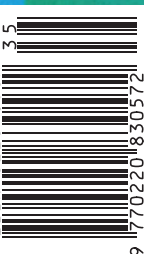


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The Environment: Ackroyd & Harvey, María Fernanda Cardoso, Nici Cumpston, Olafur Eliasson, Rosalie Gascoigne, Dale Harding, Taloi Havini, Yayoi Kusama, Betty Muffler, Pauline Rhodes, Isadora Vaughan, Pannaphan Yodmanee & more

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TALOI HAVINI OCEANIC FUTURES

Taloi Havini's expansive artworks draw on archival, scientific and cultural research, underpinned by a deeply-held commitment to First Nations knowledge systems, particularly those from her home in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Her latest project with Ocean Space in Venice is set to draw together the threads of Havini's practice in an ambitious and exciting new installation.

FEATURE *by* TESS MAUNDER

Another world is not only possible, she's on the way and, on a quiet day, if you listen very carefully you can hear her breathe.

— Arundhati Roy

Taloi Havini's work reminds me of the gentle call to arms by author and environmentalist Arundhati Roy. The artist's practice can be described as a constellation of compelling narratives that portray and bear witness to the strength, political resilience and assertions of cultural continuum. These narratives originate from her home in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, a chain of islands northwest of Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea. Havini was raised according to Buka cultural practices by political activist parents dedicated to Bougainville, where she responds to her Hakö cultural responsibilities through her Nakas clan ties.

Based between Australia and Bougainville, the artist's practice is focused on researching intergenerational transmission of Indigenous

knowledge systems, particularly those specific to her homeland, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Australian and other internationally-owned copper mines have wreaked havoc on Bougainville for decades, contributing to genocide, colonisation and environmental degradation – issues that Havini seeks to unpack in her practice. Havini's father, Moses Havini, became a political leader after the beginning of the Bougainville Civil War (1988–1998), which was triggered by the unequal distribution of resources, ethnic cleavages and other factors that arose from the Panguna copper mine, opened in 1972 as a subsidiary of the Australian mining company Rio Tinto – Zinc Corporation.

In an interview I conducted with the artist as part of my edited anthology *Absolute Humidity* in 2017, I asked Havini what she thinks needs to change in terms of urgent environmental action. She said: "We need to look after our water, oceans and forests. There are places in the world where Indigenous people are totally

Installation view
TALOI HAVINI
Answer to the Call, 2021
The Soul Expanding
Ocean #1: Taloi Havini
Ocean Space, Venice
Photo: gerdastudio

Courtesy the artist and
Ocean Space, Venice

dependent on living on their traditional lands, which is the case in Bougainville, and half my family still live like this. It is unfortunate for them that what lies under their land is desired by foreign interests, whether it's huge gold and copper deposits or hardwood trees for logging. Multinational companies don't care about Indigenous people's land ownership, which is a spiritual and nurturing ancient connection to the environment; they only see them as blocking what they want to access for their own purposes and wealth."

In her research, Taloi engages with living cultural practitioners, processes, sciences, material collections and archives, often responding to these experiences and sites of investigation with photomedia, ceramic or installation-based outcomes. The artist first gained attention through her photographic series made in 2009 in a collaboration with Stuart Miller. The series depicts cinematic-scale environments taken from mine excavations, deforestation and copper poisoned water with the people of Bougainville in the foreground, and were shown at the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane in 2015 to critical acclaim. Since then, the artist has exhibited at the Honolulu Biennial (2019), Hawaii; *The National: New Australian Art* (2017), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Sharjah Biennial 13: *Tamawuj* (2017), United Arab Emirates; and the 3rd Aichi Triennial (2016), Nagoya.

Building upon her work during the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial in 2015, Havini was two years later invited back to contribute to the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial through a project called *Women's Wealth* (2017 – ongoing). This community cultural development project focuses on the ongoing importance and richness of women's creativity within the predominantly matrilineal societies of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and nearby provinces of the Solomon Islands. The project was launched on Buka Island in April 2017 and then presented at the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, held at Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane from 2018 to 2019.

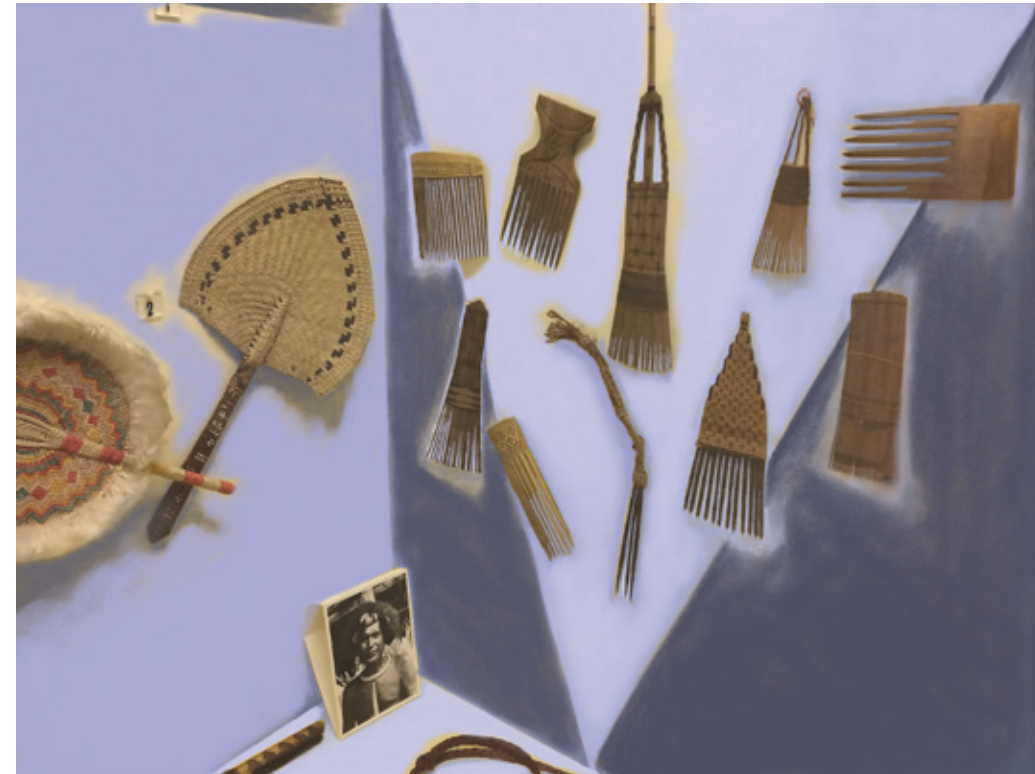
The artist's practice subverts imperial collection-based classification systems, such as those employed by Western anthropologists, historians and museums. This was most recently explored in her work *Useful Arts* (2021) commissioned by Buxton Contemporary, Melbourne on occasion of the exhibition *This brittle light* curated by Melissa Keys. For the commission, Havini created an installation that replicates a banal museum storeroom – audiences recognise the sterile and bureaucratic design that represents home to a great many collections today. Inside this storeroom, and in contrast to it, the artist presents a selection of annotated Kastom (traditional culture) objects from her own personal and family collection. This gesture by this artist is an act of cultural agency. Here, she reclaims the museum space as her own and in doing so raises critical questions around notions of ownership, repatriation, the politics of display, the history of classification and the moral urgency for colonial accountability.

To accompany the exhibition, the artist invited art historian and Uncomfortable Art Tours' founder Alice Procter to write about the work. In her essay, Procter writes: "*Useful Arts* is a piece of theatre, an elaborate set that



All, Installation view
TALOI HAVINI
Useful Arts, 2021
11 composite
digital images

*Light Source
Commission*, 2021
Buxton Contemporary,
University of Melbourne
Courtesy the artist and
Buxton Contemporary
© Taloi Havini



is simultaneously constructed and real. The objects here are from Taloi Havini's own collection – it's her name on the labels, her family credited as donors. There are works created for previous exhibitions, inherited pieces, gifts, things commissioned by the artist. This installation is a space of tension. Everything here is treasured; everything is worthy of display – but imitating the storeroom pushes us to think about how and why these objects are held."

Despite her international success, and somewhat surprisingly, Havini only just held her first solo exhibition in 2020 with Artspace Sydney, in partnership with Sydney Festival. Titled *Reclamation*, the exhibition included an immersive video installation titled *Habitat* (2018–19) and *Reclamation* (2020), which is a large-scale installation made with members of Havini's matrilineal clan, referencing customary designs that are used for specific, temporal architectures and demarcated by a covering of sand. *Habitat* is a four-channel video installation that the artist began in 2015, after she was given access to the National Film & Sound Archive of Australia – where she obtained footage of Australian presence in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville – fusing archival footage with film excerpts of her own community and family.

Moving forward, the artist's next exhibition is an exciting one – *The Soul Expanding Ocean #1: Taloi Havini at Ocean Space, Venice*, commissioned by TBA21–Academy in Venice. The exhibition reflects on a research trip undertaken in late 2020 by Havini, which saw the artist map the Australian Great Barrier Reef seabed together with Schmidt Ocean Institute. In this new commission, she responds to this experience through her own inherited Hakö epistemologies of navigating time and space, drawing from a sonic call-and-answer method. This huge installation-style work on an ambitious platform will push her practice further. Locally, Havini has just been appointed to the board of Artspace Sydney, an appointment readers can look forward to following.

Havini's practice urges us to not only start listening to First Nations peoples, but also to further elevate their knowledge to ensure that audiences are aware of these important histories and cultural practices. Her practice engages in intergenerational sharing, asserting a place for this important knowledge in the spotlight and on the international stage. We need to listen. **V**

The Soul Expanding Ocean #1: Taloi Havini shows at Ocean Space, Venice until October 17, 2021.
taloihavini.com

Bottom
Installation view
TALOI HAVINI
Useful Arts, 2021
11 composite
digital images

*Light Source
Commission*, 2021
Buxton Contemporary,
University of
Melbourne

Courtesy the artist and
Buxton Contemporary
© Taloi Havini

Opposite, top to bottom
Installation view
TALOI HAVINI
Habitat, 2018–19
four-channel video:
10 min 35 sec, at
Reclamation, 2019–20
Artspace, Sydney

Installation view
TALOI HAVINI
Reclamation, 2019–20
Artspace, Sydney
Photos: Zan Wimberley
Courtesy the artist
© Taloi Havini

Installation view
TALOI HAVINI
Answer to the Call, 2021
*The Soul Expanding
Ocean #1: Taloi Havini*
Ocean Space, Venice
Photo: gerdastudio

Courtesy the artist and
Ocean Space, Venice

HAVINI'S PRACTICE URGES US TO NOT ONLY START LISTENING TO FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES, BUT ALSO TO FURTHER ELEVATE THEIR KNOWLEDGE TO ENSURE THAT AUDIENCES ARE AWARE OF THESE IMPORTANT HISTORIES AND CULTURAL PRACTICES. HER PRACTICE ENGAGES IN INTERGENERATIONAL SHARING, ASSERTING A PLACE FOR THIS IMPORTANT KNOWLEDGE IN THE SPOTLIGHT AND ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE.

